

# California M E D I C I N E

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## Physicians in Politics — as Good Citizens

LEWIS A. ALESEN, M.D., *Los Angeles*

THIS is an election year of high political voltage in California and in the nation, and most doctors I talk to are taking their politics seriously. I think that's fine, because doctors, like all good Americans, should first of all be good citizens.

Some people have criticized doctors because, in the course of their nationwide battle against socialized medicine, they have descended from their ivory towers and entered the world of public affairs. The critics who call for the doctors to return to their towers, of course, have been on the losing side of the battle.

I think doctors should not withdraw from the field of active citizenship, and I believe they will not. One of the wonderful things that happened to doctors in the course of their fight has been the realization that the fight really is just a skirmish in the over-all fight to uphold basic American principles above the muddy flood waters of socialism, communism and fascism that have engulfed so much of the world.

Doctors, I believe, owe a great debt to the many thousands of individuals, community groups and national organizations that allied themselves with medicine's cause—to legislators and laymen, to leaders of other professions, to those businessmen and labor leaders who spoke out to defend a free profession from the threat of political domination. Individual doctors who concern themselves with politics are partially repaying that debt, for they are carrying the fight for freedom beyond the field of narrow self-interest.

The physician is trained always to observe and respect the law of cause and effect. He knows that an untended cut will result in an infection. He knows that if a cancer is not removed, the patient will die.

Address of the President of the California Medical Association upon induction to office at the meeting of the House of Delegates, Los Angeles, April 27, 1952.

Most of us, in dealing with the problems of our daily lives, pay due attention to that law. The farmer knows that if he plants barley, he can't expect to reap wheat. He can't expect to harvest oranges from his peach trees.

Yet the social planners of our era—the starry-eyed promoters of economic Utopia—insist on ignoring and breaking the law of cause and effect. They would have us believe that if we plant the seeds of tyranny, we will reap wealth; that if we plant the seeds of socialism, we will have liberty.

### NATURE'S EMPHASIS ON THE INDIVIDUAL

Let's examine briefly the economics of the world we live in from the viewpoint of the biologist. The biologist, whose job it is to study living organisms, never ignores the law of cause and effect. He deals with things as they are—not as he might imagine or even prefer them to be. Nature, the biologist knows, has one basic, changeless principle. It is the principle of individual responsibility: *individual reward for individual merit and individual penalty for individual failure.*

Nature's unvarying emphasis is upon the individual member of a species. Her sole use of group action is to afford the individual an opportunity for development and to protect him against attack by other species or groups, or by other individuals in the same group. The whole evolutionary process has been directed toward improvement in form and function of the individual. In all of the 800 million years of evolution, *during which Nature commenced with an ameba and achieved a Mozart*, she never varied from the underlying principle of individual responsibility. Our social planners—blithely flying in the face of Nature—exalt the glory and power of the group over the worth and dignity of the individ-

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## EDITORIAL

### 1952 Annual Session

What has been described by many members as one of the best Annual Sessions in C.M.A. history was concluded in Los Angeles on April 30. In all departments it operated smoothly and with a greater degree of leisure than has characterized earlier meetings.

Registration was over 4,000, more than it had ever been before; but so well organized was the registration desk that there was none of the tedium or of the confusion that usually attends the business of registering at a convention, large or small. Indeed, one registrant was heard to say that, save for the fact that he was pleasantly greeted at the desk, he felt "like an automobile being assembled."

In the scientific department, the session presented a program of excellent papers in all sections. Those who attended had opportunity to hear interesting presentations by the Association's guest speakers: Charles L. Brown, M.D., dean, Hahnemann Medical College, Philadelphia; William S. McCann, M.D., Charles A. Dewey professor of medicine, University of Rochester School of Medicine, Rochester, N. Y.; Lester R. Dragstedt, M.D., professor of surgery, University of Chicago School of Medicine; Haven Emerson, M.D., professor emeritus, Public Health Administration, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, past president, American Public Health Association, New York; and Eugene P. Pendergrass, M.D., professor of radiology, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Philadelphia. For the most part, the available meeting rooms were adequate to handle those present, and interest in all subjects was high. The scientific exhibits were well attended and came in for high praise. Medical motion pictures were shown daily on a day-long schedule, covering a multitude of subjects and drawing large and enthusiastic audiences. The director of this section of the program again came in for the plaudits of his fellows for the excellence of the display.

Exceptionally able newspapermen who were assigned by newspapers in Los Angeles and San Fran-

cisco to cover the meeting expressed pleasure that the Association had helped make their task easier.

On the social side, the Woman's Auxiliary put on an unusually fine program and, as usual, attracted many members of the Association to its reception. Its business meetings were very well attended and commanded a great deal of interest.

The House of Delegates, this year operating with two reference committees to consider new business, put in its usual long hours and came up with its usual sound decisions. Great interest was shown in the report of the C.P.S. Study Committee. Made in the form of a progress report, it brought to the fore some subjects on which definite recommendations were possible now and discussed others which will require further study. The House voted to continue this committee in existence, both for the purpose of carrying on further studies and as a means of retaining the valuable knowledge which the committee members have gained in the past nine months.

Considerable discussion took place in the House of Delegates over the interim sessions of the House. When the votes were counted, the Interim Session was retained and tentative arrangements have been made to hold the next interim meeting in San Francisco in early December.

In the elections, Dr. John W. Green of Vallejo was chosen as President-Elect. Dr. Donald A. Charnock was reelected as Speaker of the House and Dr. Wilbur Bailey was picked as Vice-Speaker. Drs. Warren L. Bostick of Marin County, Omer W. Wheeler of Riverside, Arthur A. Kirchner of Los Angeles and Hollis L. Carey of Butte were named as new members of the Council, succeeding Drs. Green, Bailey, Thompson and the late John Ball. Other incumbent Councilors were reelected.

A full transcript of the House of Delegates meetings will appear in next month's issue. It is highly recommended reading for the many members who cannot attend the Annual Session but wish to keep up with the affairs of the California Medical Association.

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## **NOTICES AND REPORTS**

### **The New President-Elect**

John W. Green of Vallejo, who for 38 years has been almost continuously an official in organized medicine at local, state and national levels—with time out for military service in the first world war—was elected President-Elect of the California Medical Association at the 1952 Annual Session in Los Angeles in April.

The record of Dr. Green's official posts indicates that almost from the time he became a full-fledged physician his ability and usefulness in medical organizations was recognized. Graduated from Rush Medical College in 1908, he interned at Mercy Hospital, Iron River, Mich., and then:

1914, secretary of Black Hills, South Dakota, District Medical Society.

1915-1916, secretary Koble County, Indiana, Medical Society.

1917-1921, served in U. S. Navy. His last assignment was as ship's surgeon on vessels returning troops from France, and he was discharged at Mare Island Navy Yard, Vallejo. There he reentered private practice, specializing in diseases of the eye, ear, nose and throat, and became a member of the Solano County Medical Society, which he served six years as secretary, two years as president.

For eleven years Dr. Green was a member of the House of Delegates of the California Medical Association and for the past twelve years has been a member of the C.M.A. Council representing the Tenth Councilor District. He is also a delegate from California to the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association.

Like many a busy man, the new President-Elect has a bow with many strings. That he has found time for other than the organizational aspects of medicine is indicated in the fact that he is a past-president of the Vallejo Academy of Medicine and of the Northern California Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Society. And there is hardly a civic organization in his own community that he has not served or does not now serve in one official capacity or another. Nor is he a man unacquainted with budgets and balance sheets and income accounts: He was the first president of the Vallejo Finance and Thrift



JOHN W. GREEN

Company and is now a director of the Vallejo branch of the Bank of America.

Although the record speaks well, perhaps a better estimate is given in the words of his long-time friend, Dr. Dwight H. Murray: "He will never falter in continuing to do what he believes to be the best for medicine and the welfare of the people of California."

Dr. Green, a physician's son, was born in 1886 on Independence Day.

# CALIFORNIA MEDICINE

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(Or.)—Original Article	(CR)—Case Report
(Ed.)—Editorial	(I)—Information
(CMA)—California Medical Association	(LE)—Letters to the Editor

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